

Acta Sanctæ Sedis

Pope John Paul II

General Audience, Wednesday, 11 October, 2000

Eucharist is perfect sacrifice of praise

1. “Through Him, with Him, in Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honor is Yours, almighty Father.” This proclamation of Trinitarian praise seals the prayer of the Canon at every Eucharistic celebration. The Eucharist, in fact, is the perfect “sacrifice of praise”, the highest glorification that rises from earth to heaven, “the source and summit of the Christian life in which (the children of God) offer the Divine Victim (to the Father) and themselves along with It” (*Lumen gentium*, n. 11). In the New Testament, the Letter to the Hebrews teaches us that the Christian liturgy is offered by “a High Priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens,” who achieved a unique sacrifice once and for all by “offering up Himself” (cf. Heb 7: 26-27). “Through Him then”, the Letter says, “let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God” (Heb 13: 15). Today let us briefly recall the two themes of sacrifice and praise which are found in the Eucharist, *sacrificium laudis*.

2. First of all the sacrifice of Christ becomes present in the Eucharist. Jesus is really present under the appearances of bread and wine, as He Himself assures us: “This is my body ... this is my blood” (Mt 26: 26, 28). But the Christ present in the Eucharist is the Christ now glorified, who on Good Friday offered Himself on the cross. This is what is emphasized by the words he spoke over the cup of wine: “This is My Blood of



the covenant, which is poured out for many” (Mt 26: 28; cf. Mk 14: 24; Lk 22: 20). If these words are examined in the light of their biblical import, two significant references appear. The first consists of the expression “blood poured out” which, as the biblical language attests (cf. Gn 9: 6), is synonymous with violent death. The second is found in the precise statement “for many”, regarding those for whom this blood is poured out. The allusion here takes us back to a fundamental text for the Christian interpretation of Scripture, the fourth song of Isaiah: by his sacrifice, the Servant of the Lord “poured out his soul to death”, and “bore the sin of many” (Is 53: 12; cf. Heb 9: 28; 1 Pt 2: 24).

3. The same sacrificial and redemptive dimension of the Eucharist is expressed by Jesus’ words over the bread at the Last Supper, as they are traditionally related by Luke and Paul: “This is My Body which is given for you” (Lk 22: 19; cf. 1 Cor 11: 24). Here too there is a reference to the sacrificial self-giving of the Servant of the Lord according to the passage from Isaiah already mentioned (53: 12): “He poured out his soul to death...; he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.” The Eucharist is above all else a sacrifice. It is the sacrifice of the Redemption and also the sacrifice of the New Covenant, as we believe and as the Eastern Churches clearly profess: “Today’s sacrifice”, the Greek Church stated centuries